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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 000391

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran: Nuclear Program
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Key stories in the media:  
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Maariv led with the Israeli defense establishment's concern that Iran would crush efforts by PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to achieve a hudna (truce). Leading media quoted Abbas as saying Sunday that such an agreement is imminent. During the weekend, major media reported on the continued quiet in the Gaza Strip; on Sunday, they quoted Palestinian officials as saying that Hamas has acceded to Abbas's demand to stop terror attacks for one month. Today, Ha'aretz quoted IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon as saying at Sunday's cabinet meeting, which was held in Sderot, that the quiet in the Gaza Strip was fragile and that there were still elements, Syria and Hizbullah in particular, that would try to heat things up in the sector. PM Sharon said at the meeting that he hoped the quiet would continue, but warned that if it did not, "the IDF and security forces will continue to do all that is required to remove the threat hanging over the residents there." On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that Israel plans to ask the U.S. to offer assistance to Abbas and help him contend with any threats to his rule. The newspaper also quoted GOI sources as saying that Israel will tell the U.S. that the main threat to Abbas's leadership comes from Syria, Iran and Hizbullah. This morning, Israel Radio reported that Hamas is prepared for a cease-fire, provided Israel cease all military activities against the Palestinians, and that Abbas has demanded significant gestures of Israel. Speaking on the radio from Florida this morning, Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu warned that the truce could lead to the rearming of the terrorist organizations, with which he said Israel would not talk. However, like other Israeli politicians, Netanyahu expressed his hope that Abbas is steering a new course.

Over the weekend, several media reported that A/S William Burns will arrive next week for talks with regional leaders.

Ha'aretz reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin promised PM Sharon in a phone conversation Thursday that he should not close the deal to sell shoulder-launched missiles to Syrian President Bashar Assad during the latter's visit to Moscow, which begins today. Israel Radio reported that the GOI has learned that Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov made a similar promise to Secretary of State Colin Powell last week.

Yediot and Israel Radio reported that the defense establishment is resuming the erection of the West Bank security fence in the Ariel-Salfit area -- a segment whose construction the U.S. administration opposes.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz that Abbas will soon be raising with Israel the matter of the cabinet decision to apply absentee property law in East Jerusalem.

Israel Radio reported that today a court released Tali Fahima, the Jewish woman who was accused of "aiding the

enemy," from detention and placed her under house arrest.

All media reported that the UN General Assembly session commemorating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau will take place today, at which the foreign ministers of Israel and Germany will deliver speeches.

Maariv and Ha'aretz reported that births in the Israeli Arab sector have decreased by 3.5 percent in 2004. Maariv quoted sources in the treasury as saying that cuts in child allowances "are conducive to a demographic balance."

Yediot reported that the U.S. authorities have recently refused to grant a visa to an employee of Israel's Consulate-General in New York. The newspaper notes that Ambassador Dan Kurtzer, who was personally approached by Foreign Ministry Deputy D-G Yoram Ben-Zeev, has promised to help solve the problem.

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**I. Mideast:**  
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**Summary:**  
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Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "A mental and practical change on the part of Israel is needed."

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Gewirtz opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Israel should learn a few quick lessons from what Abu Mazen has taught it, so that it does not end up missing the current change."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Abbas seems genuinely motivated to quell the terrorism to which too many Gazans have been resorting.... [But] he continues to talk about talking with rather than fighting the people who, in his own analysis, have been doing the Palestinian cause severe damage."

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "It is obvious that the calm in the territories will not be absolute.... [But] even if the conflict continues, it will not be the same."

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz: "The American experience in Iraq and Afghanistan shows ... that there is no need to fear what's known as a 'bear hug.'"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "After [the Oslo] theory exploded with blood and fire in our faces, Ariel Sharon has adopted it."

**Block Quotes:**  
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**I. "Shaping a New Reality"**

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (January 24): "All those who have favored a tough military policy toward the Palestinians must now draw the called-for conclusion from the efforts by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to achieve a comprehensive cease-fire with Israel and to support a policy of quiet in return for quiet.... Abu Mazen will want to prove that quiet pays, that his long-standing opposition to violence was justified and that without violence, the Palestinians can achieve things, too. For this to happen, a mental and practical change on the part of Israel is needed. Israel will have to declare a cease-fire publicly in return for the Palestinian truce. It will have to honor its declaration even if stumbles across an opportunity to strike at a strategic or random target, and it will have to make do with striking at ticking bombs only.... [At the same time,] Israel is not negotiating with Hamas, but it has to be noted that for the first time since the birth of the radical Islamic organization, it is voicing demands that are not impossible to meet."

**II. "When the Baby Bird Lays an Egg"**

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Gewirtz opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 24): "Whether or not Abu Mazen succeeds in reaching a 'cease-fire' agreement, and whether or not such an agreement survives the many obstacles that threaten its success, the PA Chairman has already noted one clear success to his credit: he has caused a turnabout that made it clear that the

changing of the guard in the Palestinian leadership has created a basis for a different reality, and this is a change that also compels the Israeli leadership to urgently replace the outmoded operating disk that runs its analysis and response systems. The surprising 'trick' played by Abu Mazen made it clear that the Israeli problem is no longer Arafat's 'irrelevancy,' but rather the irrelevant assessments of its intelligence agencies. Israel always accused the Palestinians of missing every possible opportunity. Israel should learn a few quick lessons from what Abu Mazen has taught it, so that it does not end up missing the current change."

### III. "Beyond the Lull"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (January 24): "Abbas seems genuinely motivated to quell the terrorism to which too many Gazans have been resorting. As a Palestinian, he has argued for some time that the armed struggle is ineffective and will not lead the Palestinian cause to its destination. As an aspiring statesman, he must show that he actually rules the people he has been elected to lead. Still, this one individual's motivation can quickly prove irrelevant, the way it already did back in summer 2003, when then-prime minister Abbas's 'hudna' arrangement with the Islamist terror organizations collapsed a few weeks after its much heralded unveiling. The fundamental flaw in that arrangement was the failure to even make an appearance of flexing an anti-terrorist muscle, as Abbas insisted the hard-liners could be convinced rather than forced to lay down their arms. Now Abbas has deployed troops, which he did not do previously. At the same time, he continues to talk about talking with rather than fighting the people who, in his own analysis, have been doing the Palestinian cause severe damage."

### IV. "Too Soon to Rejoice"

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (January 23): "The latest developments in the Gaza Strip ... have historical significance. Nevertheless, anyone who thinks that the terror attacks are completely behind us is mistaken. It is obvious that the calm in the territories will not be absolute.... [But] even if the conflict continues, it will not be the same. The terror attacks have lost a great deal of their legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinian population and for the first time in more than four years, the Palestinian security forces have received clear orders to prevent them. Thirteen security organizations deliberately divided by Yasser Arafat are at the height of a process that will turn them into only three, with one goal: to attain calm and fight anarchy.... If the terror attacks continue in the near future alongside the positive policy of Abu Mazen, Israel's political echelon will have to decide between gut-level severe responses like those during Arafat's time and considered responses such as restraint, such as after the last terror attack at the Karni crossing and the firing of Qassam rockets on Sderot last week. Abu Mazen, too, has a difficult challenge if the terror attacks continue. The Palestinian leader will be obligated to make good his threats and not stop at mere talk and persuasion. Otherwise, we will simply go from one Intifada to another format."

### V. "Applying Baghdad Lessons to Khan Yunis"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz (January 23): "The American experience in Iraq and Afghanistan shows ... that there is no need to fear what's known as a 'bear hug.' The Abbas government, like that of Allawi or of Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan, needs aid to rehabilitate the economy and the society. The U.S. did not set prior conditions for such aid in Iraq and Afghanistan.... In Ramallah there is a Palestinian partner who wants to administer an orderly, quiet Palestinian state without terrorism. That has to be the working assumption. With that assumption, it will be possible to conduct negotiations in a bilateral disengagement plan, on unconditional aid and on the continuation of the diplomatic process."

### VI. "The New Security Establishment"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (January 23): "After a wealth of bellicose declarations, mendacious public statements as if there were no restrictions on the IDF, it has become evident, as usual, that Ariel Sharon had lied, once again.... But the scandal this time is multi-dimensional: the Israeli government has placed responsibility for the security of Israeli citizens in the hands of the Palestinian

army. It was not very long ago when the very same Sharon explained that these very same troops were responsible for terrorism murdering innocent civilians. And now Ariel Sharon is asking these murderers to prevent murder. That kind of warped logic and lunacy hasn't been seen here ever since Ariel Sharon's current partners explained to us that 'they' would fight terror 'without the High Court of Justice and without [the Israeli human rights group] B'Tselem.' After that theory exploded with blood and fire in our faces, Ariel Sharon has adopted it."

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12. Iran: Nuclear Program:  
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Summary:  
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Defense and foreign affairs columnist Amir Oren wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "A nuclear Iran is in fact a common danger to Jerusalem and Washington, though each side in the partnership finds it convenient to cast the responsibility on the other."

Block Quotes:  
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"Israeli Joker in the Iranian Poker Game"

Defense and foreign affairs columnist Amir Oren wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 23): "A nuclear Iran is in fact a common danger to Jerusalem and Washington, though each side in the partnership finds it convenient to cast the responsibility on the other. Israel wants to stop being an Iranian target and foist the burden of dealing with the issue on the international community, headed by President Bush. It is important for the Americans not to give the impression that they are eager to precede diplomatic discussions with a military strike, but also to remind the Iranians that their bluff in the nuclear poker game is liable to fall apart in the face of a card not part of the European deck -- the Israeli joker."

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13. Bush Inauguration:  
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Summary:  
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Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized: "A little more modesty and a little less arrogance would not have diminished [President Bush's] dignity."

Block Quotes:  
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"Dangerous Overconfidence"

Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized (January 23): "The feeling [President Bush] conveyed to his audience [in his inaugural speech] was that he is imbued with overconfidence, and with a sense of unlimited power. A little more modesty and a little less arrogance would not have diminished his dignity, but the President of the world's superpower allows himself to feel he can manage the world as he fancies."

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